

The Retrogaming Times

THE BIMONTHLY RETROGAMING HOBBYIST NEWSLETTER

TWENTY-NINTH ISSUE - NOVEMBER 2020

LOCAL COUPLE SWEEPS ENDURANCE RACE!

The Retrogaming Times
- The Bimonthly Retrogaming Hobbyist Newsletter -

The Retrogaming Times
Twenty-Ninth Issue - November 2020
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Prepare to Qualify

by [David Lundin, Jr.](#)

If there is one constant throughout this year that has resonated with me, it is that time marches on, even for video games. While we will always be retrogaming focused here, the dawn of a new generation of video games only weeks away shows the resiliency and continual advancement of the industry. The success of present-day modern gaming only reinforces the importance of celebrating and exploring its roots and that's exactly what we will continue to do here. Let's do so together!

We close out the year with everything from jolly treats to ghoulish frights, beginning with Merman's look back at the Commodore 64 homebrew scene throughout 2020. Donald Lee shares more ways to keep active at home during current times, as he dusts off the Nintendo Wii to expand his workout routine. Action packed street racing roars into Arcade Obscure with an often overlooked title from a celebrated developer. Our annual Holiday Gift Guide returns with an assortment of retrogaming themed gift ideas as chosen by newsletter staff, past and present. Speaking of newsletter staff, The Retrogaming Times welcomes new contributor Dan Pettis with his review of Bucky O'Hare on the NES. FAITH, a retro-inspired horror game, may be the perfect companion to changing seasons and cooler nights - that is if you can keep yours. In this issue's cover story, the classic NES driving game Rad Racer slides into victory lane with a turbocharged retrospective. Duck Hunt was an important part of Nintendo's entry into American home gaming, and Todd Friedman looks back at his experiences with this original pack-in game. All that and more are ahead in this issue of The Retrogaming Times!

I want to again remind our readers if they have comments or questions about anything covered in the newsletter, or there is something they would like featured in a future issue of The Retrogaming Times, to contact me directly at trt@classicplastic.net! Of course article submissions are also always open. If you have something ready to go, the address is the same, trt@classicplastic.net. **"If there is something you want to write about, send it in!"**

If you're stir crazy at home and are a retrogamer, there has to be something on your mind - let us know by submitting an article!



Upcoming Events

Compiled by [David Lundin, Jr.](#)

NOTICE: Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, many shows and events have canceled, postponed, or modified their dates. For the latest on the events listed below, please visit their individual websites or contact their relevant customer support channels as the current situation continues to unfold. Thank you.

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KansasFest, July 19th - 25th 2021, Kansas City, Missouri, USA

KansasFest is an annual convention offering Apple II users and retrocomputing enthusiasts the opportunity to engage in beginner and technical sessions, programming contests, exhibition halls, and camaraderie. KansasFest was originally hosted by Resource Central and has been brought to you by the KFest committee since 1995. For photos, videos, and presentations from past KansasFests, please visit the official website.

For more information, visit <http://www.kansasfest.org/>

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If there is a show or event you would like listed here, free of charge, please contact David directly at trt@classicplastic.net. Please include a short official blurb about your event along with any relevant links or contact information and it will be published in the next issue of The Retrogaming Times. The event listing will remain posted until the issue following the event date. Big or small, we want to promote your show in our newsletter.

Check out these great events, shows, and conventions and let them know you read about them in The Retrogaming Times!



It has been another fascinating year packed with new games for the Commodore 64. Here's a look back at some of the best, and a brief guide to the competitions that took place.

RESET CRAPTASTIC CODING COMPETITION

RESET magazine ran its third coding competition, challenging people to cram a game into just 4K of memory. (That is the size limit for the final executable file, with modern compression techniques helping.) I was part of the judging panel, with sponsors providing prizes. There were some unusual ideas among the 38 entries, such as Goerp's 1991 USSR Deep Space Probe Control Centre Janitor - where a Russian janitor must press the button at the right time so the fast-moving probe takes photos of a distant planet. Diagonally-scrolling Avoid and first-person shooter Bring Back My Bones both used PETSCII graphics in clever ways, while the topical puzzle game Customs had cruise passengers having their temperature taken as they left the ship. Other hits include the hilarious Orcapult from Ant Stiller (fling orcs at a tower to weaken it) and Makealevel by Monsters Go Boom (platform game AND level designer in just 4K!)



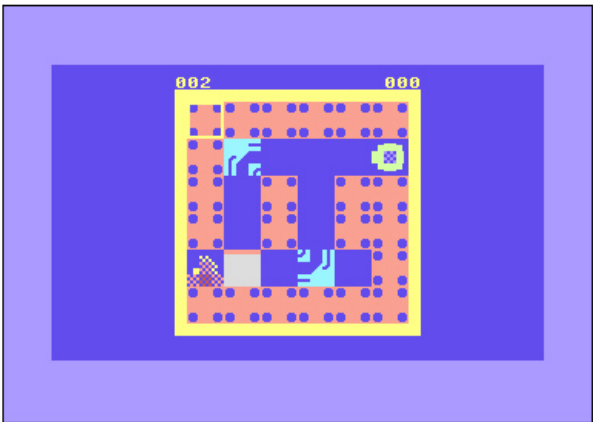
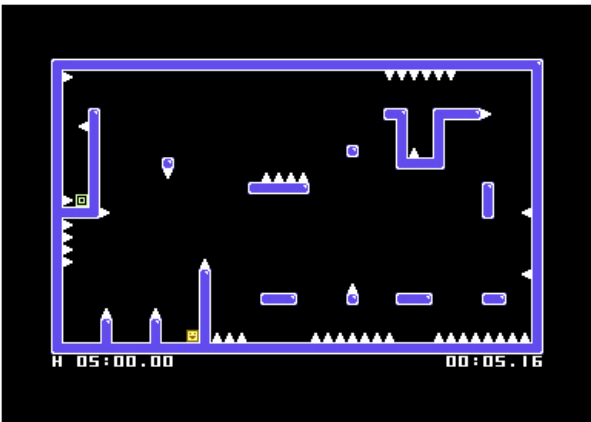
The compilation disk menu with all the entries, and Jumpin' Jalopies.

The top three in my eyes were:

Blockheads from Carleton Handley - superb wall-jumping platform game inspired by Super Meat Boy, with 5 single-player and 5 two-player levels to conquer.

Hose It Out by Oziphantom - sliding tile puzzle game where you just direct water from the tap to put out all the fires. Clever use of PETSCII graphics and a gradually increasing difficulty level.

Jumpin' Jalopies by Chris Stanley/Megastyle - jump your way up a multi-storey car park, avoiding the moving vehicles. Cute and superbly presented.



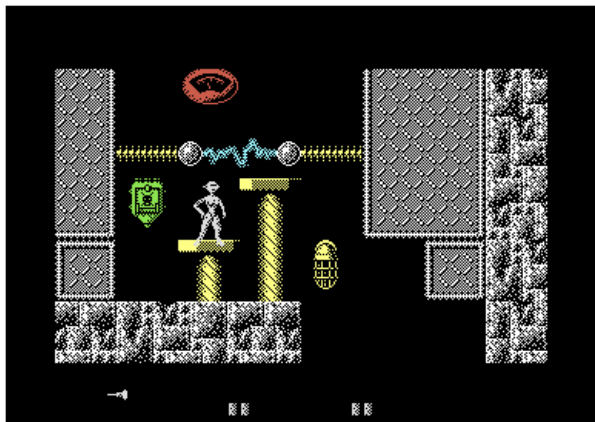
My favourites in the 4K competition, Blockheads and Hose It Out.

Competition page & downloads:
<https://reset64-magazine.itch.io/2020-reset64-4kb-craptastic-game-compo>

SEUCK COMPETITION 2020

Richard Bayliss of The New Dimension continued his series of SEUCK (Shoot 'Em Up Construction Kit) competitions, inspiring another nine entries. The top three won prizes, including extra features added to the "prize" version of each game (such as a loading screen).

Synthia in the Cyber Crypt by Eleanor Burns was a worthy winner. Using extra code to switch screens, this is actually more of a platform / arcade adventure game than a shoot 'em up. Featuring a huge main character and impressive hi-res graphics, the aim is to collect objects and then use them in the right place. It proves how flexible Sensible Software's Kit can be, with the help of some modifications.



The competition winner *Synthia*, and runner-up *Spearhead*.

Runner up **Spearhead** was by the master of SEUCK, Alf Yngve. Huge expanded sprites, parallax scrolling and shadow effects make this Scramble-inspired game look incredibly impressive for something created with the Sideways SEUCK editor. And Richard took third place himself with **Guillotine**, a horizontally scrolling space shoot 'em up with power-ups and other enhancements. Personal favourites included **Fish Pond** by RoboVox (a platform game inspired by James Pond 2 - Robocod) and **Lagrangian Point 3 - The Earth-Moon Elevator** (due to its clever premise and unusual graphics).

Competition page & downloads:
http://tnd64.unikat.sk/Seuck_Compo_2020.html

If you want to find out more about SEUCK, visit:
<http://www.seuckvault.co.uk>

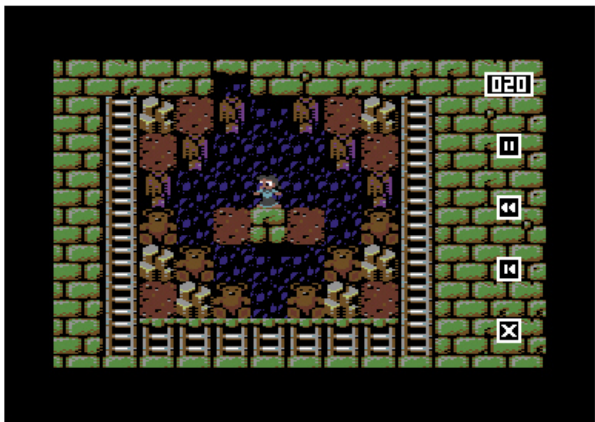
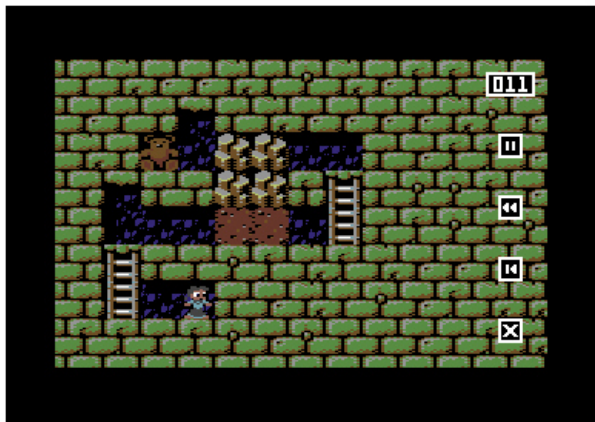
MILLIE & MOLLY

Below The Tower / Bitmap Soft and Bobr Games

Veteran C64 programmer Carleton Handley has returned to the format to program new games, and he drew inspiration from classic Game Boy title Catrap (and its earlier incarnation Pitman) for this game. Millie and Molly must run over all the monsters on a level to destroy them. Rocks can be pushed and fall via gravity to act as platforms, and ladders used to reach higher platforms. Early levels see the player controlling Millie, but later in the game you have to switch between Millie and Molly to complete more complex puzzles.

The unique idea at the heart of the game is the Rewind feature. At any time you can reverse the moves you have made, either just one step or all the way back to the beginning (as well as resetting the level completely). This is accompanied by a visual effect designed to look like a VHS recorder rewinding. Completing the level gives you a password, and there are 100 levels to tackle. And then there's the added bonus of a level editor to create your own puzzles.

As well as a digital release, this brilliant puzzle game has had two physical versions. The tape and disk version from Bitmap Soft have ten exclusive levels especially designed for it. The cartridge version from Bobr Games (also available through the Protovision store) is the basic game. Carleton is now working on an iOS version of the game, and I am helping test it.



Levels 10 and 20 of the brilliant *Millie and Molly*.

Digital download:
<https://carletonhandley.itch.io/millie-and-molly>

Tape & disk versions:
<https://www.bitmapsoft.co.uk>

Cartridge:
<https://bobr.games/index.php/our-little-shop/>
https://www.protovision.games/shop/product_info.php?products_id=290
(Currently awaiting new stock at both online shops)

THE SHADOW OVER HAWKSMILL
ICON64 / Psytronik

This was the landmark 100th release on the Psytronik label, a spiritual sequel to the earlier Legend of Atlantis. An inspector specialising in missing person cases is sent to a small village in the north-east of England, where the whole

population of the village has gone missing. After a detailed intro sequence relates the plot, the game itself takes place in a rainstorm (although this effect can be switched off). Searching to find a key, the inspector enters a building to discover...

With its dark atmosphere inspired by the works of H.P. Lovecraft, this is a really challenging game. Luckily the inspector can find extra ammo for his pistol, and upgrade to stronger weapons. Programmed by Stuart Collier, the game design and graphics are by the prolific Trevor Storey and the spooky music by Saul Cross.



The incredible animated intro, and aiming the Inspector's pistol at some bats.

Available as Standard Red Cassette, Limited Edition Clamshell Red Cassette, Budget Disk, Premium Disk and Collector's Editions (with either cartridge or disk) from:
http://binaryzone.org/retrostore/index.php?main_page=advanced_search_result&search_in_description=1&keyword=Hawksmill

Digital download from:
<https://psytronik.itch.io/hawksmill>

THE ISLE OF THE CURSED PROPHET
ICON64 / Psytronik

Set in the 1960s, when he loses his young wife to flu a desperate man turns to the occult. He discovers a ritual that could bring her back to life - if performed on a mysterious island off the coast of England. The incredible intro sequence is followed by an "action RPG" (think early Zelda) set over a huge scrolling map of the island. Helpful objects must be found, including keys to unlock doors and a compass to show hidden objects. The scythe lets you cut down grass to find secrets, the shovel digs up graves, and the sword helps you deal with the aggressive wildlife. Starting out with five hearts, dead enemies drop hearts to restore your health - and killing enough enemies increases your number of hearts. As well as keys to unlock the buildings, there is a crowbar to open hatches and a hammer to bash down stakes.

Full of secrets and with a long quest to conquer, finding all the jade stones and placing the four Elemental Stones to unlock the final ritual is worth persevering with. Fortunately the game can be saved, and if you run out of energy you can restart with all the objects discovered so far still in your possession. An amazing end sequence with a twist awaits. This is another great game designed and drawn by Trevor Storey, with music by Saul Cross and Jason Page and programming by Achim Volkers.



Part of the amazing intro sequence to Isle of the Cursed Prophet, and the church with its graveyard holds many secrets.

Available as Budget Disk, Premium Disk, Standard Tape, Limited Edition Clamshell Tape and Collector's Edition Disk from:
http://binaryzone.org/retrostore/index.php?main_page=advanced_search_result&search_in_description=1&keyword=Prophet

Digital download from:
<https://psytronik.itch.io/cursed-prophet-c64>

MW ULTRA
Covert BitOps / Protovision

Lasse Öörni has been perfecting his run & gun games ever since 1999's Metal Warrior, with recent titles Hessian and Steel Ranger adding more Metroid-style features. He has returned to that original Metal Warrior (the first of four games in the series, also available as an excellent Quadrilogy pack from Psytronik) and remade it with new features.

The story sees metal guitarist Ian joining a band and getting drawn into a mystery set in a near future city. Why are the members of heavy metal bands disappearing or being killed? And why did he dream about being held in a research facility? The new features include character portraits as you talk to people, a mobile phone to keep track of what to do next and an upgrade menu to enhance Ian's skill. You earn experience by killing or subduing enemies - more experience given for using non-lethal weapons - and when you fill the experience bar you earn a Skill Point to spend on one of five attributes. Later in the game you even get a grapple (similar to Bionic Commando or Batman) that is fun

to use. Disk and cartridge versions allow you to save progress, continuing from the last doorway/entrance you used.

This is a great game and a skilful update. The story is gripping and there is a lot of depth (with the map covering over 800 screens). Oh, and you can buy alcohol - but avoid getting too drunk, as it affects the controls!



Buying a beer in one of the many bars and clubs, and character portraits appear during dialogue.

Order the physical cartridge via:
https://www.protovision.games/shop/product_info.php?products_id=287
(Add-ons include a poster, soundtrack CD and mini first aid kit. Protovision backers via Patreon and Tippee were able to order a limited edition gold cartridge)

Digital download is at:
<https://protovision.itch.io/mw-ultra>

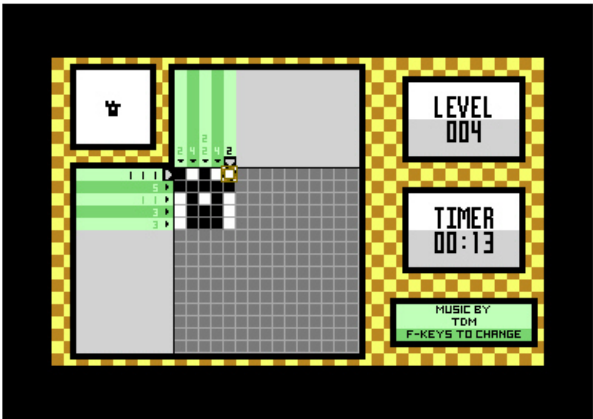
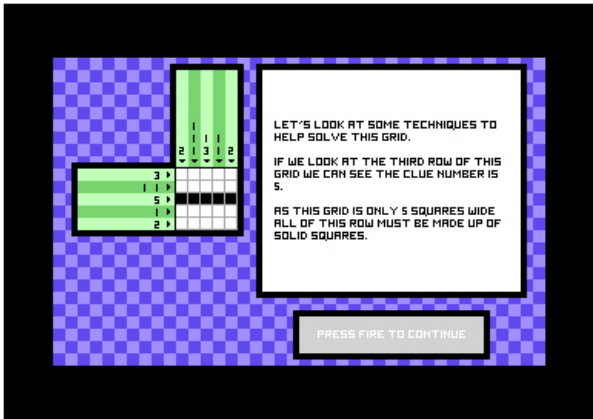
GRID PIX
Below The Tower/RGCD and Psytronik

Disclosure: I was one of three composers who created music for this game.

Carleton Handley has been working on this title for nearly three years and it finally has a physical release - on cartridge from RGCD, to be followed by disk and tape versions from Psytronik. The colourful cover artwork was created by games industry veteran Ste Pickford, and it's the first release in RGCD's new deluxe packaging.

So what is Grid Pix? If you have played Picross on other formats, you will know. These puzzles are sometimes called nonagrams, and require you to fill in pixels to create an image. Clues appear as numbers on the top and left sides of the grid. 5 would mean 5 filled pixels in a row, 3,1 would mean 3 pixels followed by a gap of at least 1 pixel and then another filled pixel. Grid Pix comes with a great tutorial and starts out with small 5x5 puzzles. With 100 puzzles to solve up to 15x15 in size there is a long-term challenge here. Although there is a timer, there is no limit; it's there as a guide. As mentioned, there are tunes from three different composers to listen to or the option of silence.

But there's more! Both the cartridge and disk versions will come with the option to load DLC (downloadable content). This will allow you to load in new sets of puzzles. The cartridge version can hold six sets of puzzles, keeping track of your progress as you play. The disk and tape versions use passwords to track progress. And the physical versions come with a puzzle pad, blank grids for you to create your own puzzles. Sending them to RGCD via the email address could see them included in a future DLC release. Although I am a recent convert to Picross, I loved solving the puzzles in this nicely presented game.



The tutorial shows you how to play Grid Pix, and level 4 is almost complete.

For the digital download visit:
<https://carletonhandley.itch.io/gridpix>

For the cartridge version, order at:
<https://rgcd.bigcartel.com/product/grid-pix-commodore-64>

BOXY MOXY
Antonia Savona / Pirates of Zanzibar & RGCD

This puzzle game is only available on cartridge, as it streams data from the cartridge ROM during gameplay. The graphics by Lobo are gorgeous, and there is some clever sampled sound (as well as music by Aldo Chiummo). The story sees a clumsy wizard accidentally fill the kingdom with noisy skulls, so it's up to his cats Boxy and Moxy to get rid of them. Boxy the blue cat can destroy skulls, but keeps moving in one direction until he hits an obstacle. Moxy the pink cat can be moved by the player to act as an obstacle, but cannot destroy the skulls. The player switches between the two cats with the fire button, trying to clear all the skulls on a level in the optimum number of moves.

Completing a level in the minimum moves shown earns three Stars, one or two extra moves gives two Stars, and taking three or more extra moves earns one Star. The map of each section shows how many Stars you have earned on

each of its 20 levels. Earning a set number of Stars unlocks the next section - starting in the Forest, 50 Stars unlocks the Village and 110 Stars unlocks the Castle. This one will definitely stretch your brain as you try and earn all the Stars, and it's very cute. The cats are great and Antonio even sampled a real cat meowing.



Getting rid of skulls in the forest, and one of the great presentation screens.

Digital download at:
<https://brokenbytes.itch.io/boxymoxy>
(For use in emulation, or on 1541 Ultimate II and EasyFlash hardware)

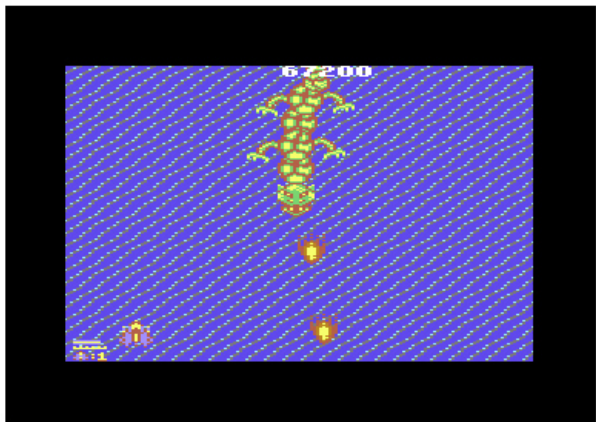
Physical cartridge version from:
<https://rgcd.bigcartel.com/product/boxymoxy-commodore-64>

ZETA WING
Sarah Jane Avory / Protovision

2019's Neutron was a brilliant vertically scrolling shoot 'em up based on arcade classic Starforce, and then there came the Christmas-themed update known as Santron. Now Neutron's creator Sarah Jane Avory has returned with another vertically scrolling game, this time based on arcade game Gemini Wing.

There are seven huge stages to rid of the mutant infestation, with a giant end-of-level boss waiting at the end of each stage. Your fighter can earn extra power by shooting a complete wave of enemies and collecting the P token left behind. Collect 12 Ps and the shot strength is increased by a level; die and the shot strength drops one level, but the power gauge stays where it is. The Z and W targets can be shot for bonus points.

What is so impressive about this game is more than the graphics and sound. Sprites are very well drawn and the bosses are made up of multiple sprites moving fluidly. The backgrounds feature impressive layers of parallax scrolling, especially the caves of level 4 and the vegetation of level 7. The music and sound effects play simultaneously, which is a clever trick. But it is the gameplay and design that really shines. Attack waves move in more than just straight lines, and the difficulty level (there are a choice of three on the title screen - Easy, Medium and Hard) is very well balanced. It is a very addictive game you will want to keep playing and conquer. Currently there are no plans for a physical release, but the download is generously priced at just US\$3.99 plus sales tax.



Catch the tokens before they scroll off the bottom of the screen, and avoid the flames from stage 2's crocodilian boss.

Digital download link:
<https://sarahjaneavory.itch.io/zeta-wing>

BEHIND THE SCENES

As mentioned in previous More C64 columns, I have been lucky enough to be involved in testing new games for the C64. I was helping test **The Isle of The Cursed Prophet**, and was gutted when I reached the end of one beta version only to find it crashed instead of loading the ending!

Another game I helped test this year was **ARCADE DAZE** from ICON64. The design and graphics are by Trevor Storey, the music by Saul Cross and programming by Stuart Collier. This will actually be a perk in the Kickstarter campaign for the ZZAP Annual 2021 (which I am heavily involved in, writing reviews and articles) before going on general sale. The game sees a kid running around an amusement arcade filled with machines, picking up coins the owner has dropped so he can play the games. Getting caught by the owner Kelly will cost one of three lives, while her patrolling cat will spin you around and make you vulnerable. Ten coins can be traded for a token at the central booth, and each play of a machine costs one token.

The 18 machines play out as mini-games based on six classics with changing graphics - a Lunar Lander type game (rescue people from the platforms), Pac-Man (collect the dots), Space Invaders, Centipede, Frogger and a maze-based tank shooting game. To win the whole game you must complete all 18 machines. Kiddie Mode makes things easier, awarding 5 coins per coin picked up and making the machines easier. Master Mode reduces it to 2 coins per pick up and harder machines. I had a lot of fun testing this, and made several contributions to fixing/changing the game (such as suggesting a change to the number of coins earned in Kiddie Mode, and finding bugs in the mini-games).

END OF THE YEAR

And there are more great games on the way, including Sarah Jane Avory's **Soul Force**, huge RPG **Vulcano Towers** and platform game **Looter: Haunted Castle**. I haven't mentioned the incredible **Fix-It Felix Jr** by Antonio Savona, or his series of outstanding Atari 2600 conversions in collaboration with Saul Cross and Steve Day. So far this has included Chopper Command, **Frostbite**, Keystone Kapers and Crackpots. Future titles planned include a conversion of Garry Kitchen's classic Pressure Cooker, and a C64 adaptation of Dan Kitchen's Gold Rush. (This unreleased Atari 2600 title started life as a sequel to Keystone Kapers, but when it was rediscovered Dan has undertaken to complete it under the new title with funding via Kickstarter).

The C64 continues to have a vibrant and evolving game scene, and long may it continue.



Ralph gets ready to wreck the building in Fix-It Felix Jr, and Frostbite Bailey tries to build his igloo.

Note: all the games mentioned here are PAL and NTSC compatible. With the exception of Boxy Moxy, the digital downloads include files compatible with the C64 Mini and THEC64. Buying the physical games from the suppliers shown will also include a free digital download.



Don's Desk - EA Sports Active - Nintendo Wii

by [Donald Lee](#)

Welcome to this edition of Don's Desk. It is October 10th, 2020 as I write this article. Things are still rather crazy in the country but I hope everyone is staying safe and well. For this issue, I am focusing on EA Sports Active Personal Trainer for the Nintendo Wii. I've mentioned the Nintendo Wii a bit before but have never really discussed any games for the system. Let's talk a bit about my history with the Wii and why I never really played a lot of games for the Wii.

Back in the summer of 2008, I was playing in a summer basketball league. The league has over 70+ teams spanning men, women and kids teams. With so many teams, the league held a kickoff dinner before the first week of the season. It was a chance for the participants of the league to catch up and also meet new players and teams in the league. As part of the summer 2008 season, the league had a raffle. I can't remember what other prizes were available (probably sports oriented) but the main prize was a Nintendo Wii. So it was a surprise to me when my ticket number was called. To this day, I still have the picture of me with the Nintendo Wii at the league kickoff dinner.

To be honest, I wasn't sure what I was going to do with the Wii as I had a PlayStation 2 already but one big use case popped up. It would be an interesting way to get my mom some light exercise. I can't remember exactly when my mom retired from work but at some point, doctors had told her it would be good to get some exercise regularly. My mom wasn't always motivated to do exercise but I did manage to get her to play the Wii (via Wii Sports - bowling and golf) for a little bit. She actually could play it a little bit as it wasn't too complicated.



Since Wii Sports worked, I thought maybe I could get my mom to do more exercise and maybe do some myself. So EA Sports Active had been introduced and I picked it up. Alas, it was probably a little too complicated for my mom. I tried it myself but I was a little too young and impatient to learn the nuances. So EA Sports Active and the Wii ended up getting mothballed. Since I had a PlayStation 2 and a computer, I spent most of my time playing games on those machines instead.

Fast forward to late 2019. My mom had passed away in April of 2019. My dad had decided to remodel his house and needed some stuff to be cleared out of the house. If it wasn't anything I wanted to keep, it was going to get dumped. As I was slowly bringing some things over to my house, it occurred to me that the Nintendo Wii was still around. Even though it had been years I had played with the Wii, I realized I missed Wii Sports. So I packed the Nintendo Wii, the controllers and some of the discs I had and moved it over to my house. The Wii was plugged into my TV and put next to my Xbox One and Nintendo Switch. Despite not being used for a long time, the Wii and Wii Sports still worked great, which made me happy.

I would play Wii Sports every now and then when I had time. Then as we all know, the COVID-19 virus hit and we were all now stuck at home. As I mentioned in a previous article, I discussed some video game exercise plans I had, some of which involved the Wii. The Wii portion involved playing Wii Sports and Wii Sports Resort.

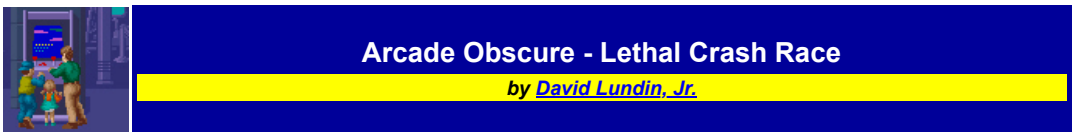
At some point a couple of months ago, I found the box for EA Sports Active. However, the disc was not in the box. I looked around but could never find the disc. I thought perhaps I had misplaced the disc and it was lost permanently. Then one day, I was looking at the other Wii discs I had and guess what I found? Apparently, I had put the EA Sports Active disc with Wii Sports. So I was back in business.

I didn't know much about EA Sports Active so I dove in and tried a few things. One issue I discovered is that I didn't have the Wii leg strap. Due to that, I thought I couldn't do some of the exercises. I tried a few things but again like I did previously, I didn't want to spend much time learning about the program and put it aside. However, my curiosity got to me so I ended up ordering the leg strap and resistance bands from eBay so I could really try EA Sports Active. The funny part? The strap (at least for what I'm doing now) isn't needed. You could place the nunchuck portion of the controller in your pants / shorts pocket and it works ok!

After spending some time working with EA Sports Active, I've developed a couple of my own custom workouts. I cycle through a boxing exercise, baseball exercise, dance exercise, tennis exercise and repeat for about three rounds and end with some "running / leg" exercises. In total, I do about 25 minutes of exercise. These custom workouts are hardly intense but light exercise is better than no exercise at all. This is the stuff I really like. What don't I like about EA Sport Active? The leg strap isn't great and the Wii doesn't always recognize what you're doing. The Nintendo Switch leg strap and motion recognition is a lot better. Some of the sports exercises like basketball is very clunky. As someone who plays real basketball, the exercises aren't too exciting or fun. Volleyball is meh to me so I've stuck to the custom programs I've created.

Despite some of the negatives, my Nintendo Wii has a new lease on life and I'll be using for a long while to come. Listen, these exercises aren't going to get me into great shape. But when combined with my other options (Nintendo Switch: Ring Fit Adventure, Fitness Boxing, Jump Rope Challenge and a couple of exercise machines), it's a nice change of pace.

In retrospect, the Nintendo Wii was a bit ahead of its time. The Nintendo Switch is a nice evolution of the Wii concept though it would be nice if there were more motion games / programs on the Switch. So if anyone still has a Wii, EA Sports Active can be had relatively cheap on Amazon or eBay and is worth a look.



Video games based around illegal street racing in one form or another have been around since the earliest days of driving games. However in the early 1990's one game came along that was about gaining street superiority by any means necessary. Lethal Crash Race is a high speed, vertically scrolling driving game, with the goal to beat a series of rivals in one-on-one street races spanning the globe. There are ten cars to choose from, each with a different driver hailing from a different country. The cars are all based on real world manufacturers and models but with their names skewed to avoid directly infringing upon them - so you'll be driving cars from the likes of "Honta," "Pherari," "Lamborjini" and others. Beat all ten drivers, including a mirror battle against yourself in palette swap fighting game style, to complete the game. Each race takes place in a different international destination. Depending on the driver selected, the order in which rivals are faced and the regions in which they are encountered changes a bit. This means that although a full playthrough will always be made up of ten races across ten stages, using a different character may send you to previously unseen alternate locations as you work through the rival list. This adds some replay value, as the mixed variety of race venues creates an incentive to use different characters in subsequent playthroughs. Additionally each character has their own short ending story, once again similar to a fighting game, with many of them ending on a zany and comedic note.

Each car has slight variations in steering responsiveness, acceleration, and speed. They also vary in what can best be described as weight, as in how they respond to collisions with other cars. Steering is controlled via left or right on the joystick, with one button to accelerate and another to brake. Slides and skids can be performed with a combination of the buttons, although the vast majority of the game will be played with the throttle wide open. Races begin with a bit of banter between drivers as they pull up to the starting line. If there's one thing I've always remembered Lethal Crash Race for it's the girls who signal the start of each race, as they're thinly veiled reworks of the main cast from the Pretty Soldier Sailor Moon anime. After the call to start is given, a point-to-point heads up race begins. Either beat your rival to the finish or destroy their car by smashing it into the terrain, hence the "lethal crash" in the title of the game. If your rival's car is destroyed the race ends instantly with you as the victor but destruction of your own car or being beat to the finish leads to a game over.



Chasing your rival up a stairway (left), Makoto Kino starts a race in an unlicensed cameo (center), racing through a Japanese festival (right)

Races take about a minute to complete and while there are turns and narrow sections to contend with, they are usually short with the emphasis on speed. Similar to other vertically scrolling driving games, such as F1 Circus and Video System's own F-1 Grand Prix, upcoming turn direction and severity indicators will appear to warn players of deviation in the straight ahead path. While success in most races can be improvised by relying on the turn indicators, some courses have obstacles, narrow sections, jumps, and obstructions that really rely on memorization and repeat play. Obviously these sections were put in to munch up a few more credits but they're not overly frustrating and I didn't find them to sour the fast reflex driving experience. However what I did dislike are long sections of curved road where the entire perspective of the road surface rotates. For some reason these areas affect top speed although there's no representation as to why you are slowing down. These areas are always vast, wide, multi lane stretches so the speed scrub doesn't make any sense. Unfortunately there aren't any shortcuts or alternate routes to discover in the densely packed courses, which is a shame as they are beautifully illustrated and cry out to be explored. Anything goes in these races and you'll often be screaming through traffic, jumping up stairways, screeching around back alleys, and plowing through goods and furniture. Hitting some objects will release money that can be picked up for bonus points at the end of a race but generally this only serves as a driving distraction. Collisions with roadside objects and other cars will decrease the vitality meter, displayed in the upper corner of the screen. The meter can be replenished by driving over a strange green wrench icon that apparently has arms and legs and dances around. Generally these pass by in a blur, as do most objects in the game, but they're often located in the center of the road and tend to show up exactly when needed.

It's those little flourishes of strangeness that give Lethal Crash Race much of its personality, as well as solidifying its importance in the lineage of games that lead to a very popular shooter series. In 1991, Video System released Turbo Force, a vertical shooter featuring flying sportscars. This was followed by Aero Fighters / Sonic Wings in 1992, a more conventional shooter built upon refinement of the gameplay mechanics of Turbo Force. In addition to being a very tightly designed and well-playing game, what made Aero Fighters stand out from other shooters of the time was its cast of eight unique pilots, each with their own visual design and personality. Video System followed up Aero Fighters with the release of Lethal Crash Race in 1993 and although it was a change in genres, it very much continued a house style Video System was establishing - crazy characters, super detailed graphics, and over-the-top action occurring in otherwise mundane environments. This creativity would explode a year later with Aero Fighters 2 / Sonic Wings 2, a game that would not only transition the series to the Neo Geo platform, but establish itself as the signature shooter franchise on the hardware. In fact Ellen and Cincia from the Aero Fighters series are first introduced in Lethal Crash Race, where they drive as the New Zealand team. Additionally Emma (who drives the Lotas Super 77) also appears in an Aero Fighters 2 ending sequence, still working as a mechanic and servicing Mecha-Keaton if the game is completed with him and the team of Cincia and Ellen.




The unlicensed cameos continue with Minako Aino (left), the narrow passageways of a busy port (center), nicely detailed environments (right)

More than anything, the audio package makes Lethal Crash Race feel right at home in the company of Aero Fighters. The music is outstanding and perfectly rides the line between orchestral and electronic. Sound effects aren't anything spectacular but they're serviceable and are fine for this type of game. While a two player option is included, I find it not much fun to play as it requires both players to remain in close proximity to one another on a single screen. Falling behind far enough to reach the bottom of the screen will trigger the same response as a large collision, with the game advancing the trailing player to catch up. Anyone who has played a scrolling driving game where all players have to stay on the same screen knows it doesn't remain entertaining for long and I can't recommend the two player mode here.

I suppose the question at the end of the day is if Lethal Crash Race is a hidden gem or not. It's certainly an obscure arcade game from the team that would go on to make and inspire spectacular games in the future, and it certainly is representative of the creativity that those later games would showcase. With that said, I can't recommend this one for everybody. There's a solid game here to appreciate and enjoy but the core gameplay is very simple, as the individual races boil down to getting out in front and not hitting any large objects. I suppose that could be said for any racing game but with races this short the experience isn't as fulfilling as many other similar games. Lethal Crash Race really does feel like a driving version of Aero Fighters and if that sounds appealing to you then you'll probably have some fun

here. For others the simple concept and unbalanced challenge that hinders some of the courses may do just the opposite. Regardless of opinion, it's still an interesting part of the history of Video System and a "deep cut" in the Aero Fighters series.



The Retrogaming Times 2020 Holiday Gift Guide

by Merman, Jason "WauloK" Oakley, David Lundin, Jr.,
Donald Lee - Introduction by David Lundin, Jr.

Continuing as an annual tradition first established last year, The Retrogaming Times Holiday Gift Guide features gift recommendations and ideas from newsletter staff. Holiday gift guide features were always my favorite seasonal inclusion in video game magazines and on game review shows, as they provided a little more insight into the personalities behind the productions. Once again the call to select a holiday gift recommendation went out to anyone who had previously contributed to any "Retrogaming Times" newsletter in its over twenty year history. This special column is published every November, so if you missed out this time and are Retrogaming Times alumni, [let me know](#) and expect an e-mail next year for your 2021 holiday pick! Please enjoy our newsletter's annual showcase of special gifts for the retrogamers on your list.

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Merman:

On June the 15th 2019 my wife Alison and I attended an amazing orchestral concert here in England. The 8-Bit Symphony saw the Hull Philharmonic Orchestra (conducted by Robin Tait) playing arrangements of Commodore 64 tunes. This had long been the ambition of C64 Audio founder Chris Abbott. However there was no recording of the concert allowed due to copyright restrictions.



So, a new Kickstarter called **8-Bit Symphony Pro** funded recording sessions with the Czech Symphony Orchestra in Prague. Robin Tait was there to conduct again. Legendary C64 composer Rob Hubbard was responsible for several of the arrangements, and Amiga legend Allister Brimble helped with the mastering. All of the tracks from the original concert were freshly recorded for the CDs, but arranged in a new running order. These incredible arrangements are now available for purchase as a physical 2-CD set or digital download (FLAC/MP3).

Order directly from C64Audio.com:
<https://c64audio.com/collections/chiptune-remix-projects/products/8-bit-symphony-pro-pre-order>

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Jason "WauloK" Oakley:

I have just the perfect Christmas gift for a retrogaming fan, the **Anbernic RG350M**! This is a pocket gaming device running on Open Dingux Linux with a 640x480 IPS display. It includes built in emulators for many classic home and arcade game systems from the 1980's and 1990's. Dual analogue sticks, a directional pad, ABXY face buttons along with shoulder buttons allow you to relive your childhood memories with accurate controls in a compact package.



The stock handheld comes with a few public domain games included but more can be added via a micro SD card.

Although it features a powerful 4770 dual 1.0 GHz CPU with 512MB RAM and 16GB internal storage, it's small enough to fit in a pocket so you can take it anywhere. The "M" in the name denotes an all metal case, with a plastic bodied version sold under the model number RG350P, but both handhelds are the same otherwise.

It can be purchased at RetroMimi with a variety of customization options:
<https://retromimi.com/collections/handhelds/products/rg350-upgrade-rg350m-aluminum-alloy-shell>

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David Lundin, Jr:

In the era when graphics in an arcade game were made up of small pixel grids laid out adjacent to one another, on-screen text would have to be created in the same way. This meant that in addition to a game's sprite assets and backgrounds, a pixel typeface would have to be designed to work within the hardware's limitations of resolution and color, as well as precious memory. Doing such with visual flair and outrageous imagination gave us the pixel typefaces that have become synonymous with many retrogaming experiences. **Arcade Game Typography: The Art of Pixel Type** details this often overlooked subject that was massively important to the advancement of video games as a visual medium. Documenting the full pixel typefaces of many arcade games from the 1970's to the 1990's, author Toshi Omigari presents a showcase of practical beauty that grew from a utilitarian task, that of displaying information for the player.



The book is beautifully printed with a quality finish and feel that is more akin to a high grade academic text, although its clean layout and clearly explained information makes it approachable for any casual reader. In addition to the highly detailed text examples contained within, equal care is given to full screen shots of many games, showing how each typeface integrates into a game's visual style. Rarely does it seem to be thought of but each character of a video game typeface is a tiny illustration, drawn within confines of as little as 7x7 pixels. Each character of a game's typeface shares the same design limitations of any other graphic in a game, making them one in the same. This means text and graphics in many arcade games are interchangeably cut from the same digital cloth, born from the same visual artistry, and should be equally celebrated and appreciated. I also find it very interesting to see how a typeface evolves over the years, with many being conscripted between different developers only to further be modified and enhanced again. The subject may seem a little strange but anyone who admires the artistry and details found in arcade video games would more than likely enjoy this book. It's also nice to see a publication about a retrogaming topic that hasn't been previously covered in such depth.

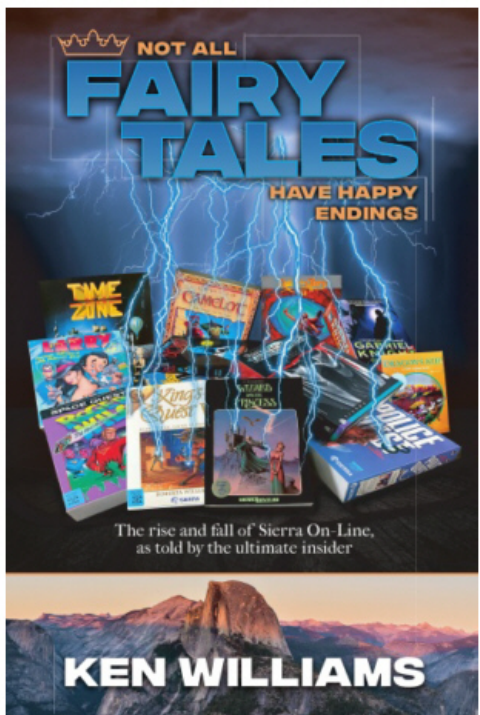
Order from Amazon:
<https://www.amazon.com/Arcade-Game-Typography-Pixel-Type/dp/0500021740>

More information and ordering options at Thames & Hudson USA:
<https://www.thamesandhudsonusa.com/books/arcade-game-typography-the-art-of-pixel-type-softcover>

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Donald Lee:

Recently, I saw an announcement posted on a Facebook group named "Apple II Enthusiasts" from one Ken Williams: "...my wife Roberta and I founded and ran for nearly 20 years a consumer software company called, Sierra On-Line. We were one of the first software publishers for the Apple II. I'm a software engineer and coded some of the early games personally. Some of our better known titles were King's Quest, Leisure-Suit Larry, Half-Life and many more. Anyway, to make a long story short: Roberta and I had big plans for this summer, but the virus kept us locked down. I was bored and Roberta said, "Write a book." I've thought about it for over 25 years and finally had the time to sit still and write."



So for the 2020 holiday shopping season, I recommend purchasing Ken's book, **Not All Fairy Tales Have Happy Endings**, about Sierra On-Line. Even though Sierra On-Line was around when I was young, my first Sierra On-Line game was technically King's Quest. Alas, my King's Quest experience was not great due to human inexperience. I knew King's Quest required 128K of RAM and had double high resolution graphics. However, when my mom got the game for me, the graphics didn't come up properly so we ended up returning the game. What I didn't realize was that my memory card needed to have a jumper to enable double high resolution graphics. So while King's Quest didn't go well, I later got Space Quest and finished the game. Maybe I'll revisit Space Quest in my Apple II column at some point. If you're into the history of the 1980's computer and video game industry, this book should be a nice one to read and gift.

More information and ordering options direct from Ken Williams:
<https://kensbook.com/>

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Happy Holidays and high scores from the staff of The Retrogaming Times!



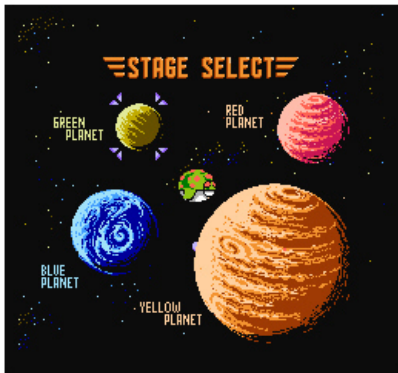
Bucky O'Hare (NES) - A Hare Above The Rest

by [Dan Pettis](#)

This excellent late era platforming shooter featuring a funky fresh green rabbit named Bucky O'Hare might not have happened without an assist from the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. The series was a product of the radical animal toy line craze of the late 1980's and early 1990's, sparked by the over the top popularity of the Ninja Turtles. They had millions of kid shouting "cowabunga" and launched many imitation toy lines. Like the turtles, Bucky O'Hare originated as an independent comic that was created by Larry Hama and Michael Golden in 1984. The titular green hare Bucky leads a motley crew of mammals, and a young boy from San Francisco named Willy Du Witt, in a desperate struggle against an oppressive regime of evil toads for control of a galaxy stuffed full of spaceships known as the Aniverse. It's kind of like an animalized riff on the Star Wars films but aimed at kids. The show even gave a nod to George Lucas' ground breaking sci-fi series by naming the bad guys the Toad Empire and dubbing their disposable lackeys the Storm Toads.

Unlike his green brethren the Ninja Turtles, Bucky O'Hare never quite caught on with kids and failed to truly launch as a pop culture phenomenon. Despite the short life of the cartoon show, the series was given a proper video game treatment courtesy of one of the greatest developers of the era: Konami. Bucky was featured in two video games, both released in 1992, the first of which was an arcade game in the classic Konami street brawler beat 'em up style. It played similarly to the Ninja Turtles arcade games, but let the player use guns as their primary weapons. This was another in a long line of excellent quarter munchers from Konami but for Bucky's sole home outing, Konami decided to go a different route. They crafted a platforming shooter for the funky fresh rabbit in the vein of Mega Man and it was launched exclusively for the Nintendo Entertainment System.

The game finds Bucky's entire crew kidnapped by the sinister toads, and the player tasked with finding and rescuing them one by one and putting an end to the toad menace. The first set of four stages can be tackled in any order. These stages are incredibly varied graphically and thematically. They are not however very creatively named. The Green Planet has giant trees to climb, waterfalls to traverse and features evil woodland critters to blast. The Blue Planet is a slippery, cavernous ice themed zone. The Red Planet is a volcano filled area with lava to outrun and many instant death spots. And finally, the Yellow Planet is a huge industrial zone with fast coasters to zip along on and asteroids to ride.



Bucky scales a tree on Green Planet (left), the planetary sage select screen (right)

After completing each one of the initial stages, a new member of the team will be rescued, each one with different and useful skills that will help you in your quest to take down the toads. The game features a fairly unique charging mechanic. By holding down the B button, which is also used to shoot, the player can access each crew member's unique ability. There is also a power bar that can be expanded by power ups found in the levels to increase the duration of each character's special ability. Deadeye Duck found on the Red Planet has a shot with three bullets and can climb walls. Jenny in the Blue Planet can charge a powerful psychic blast that can be moved throughout the screen by the player. Willy of the Yellow Planet has a strong default blaster and an even stronger charged blast. Rounding out the team is the one eyed robot Blinky who can hover for a short amount of time and has a downward sloping blast capable of destroying ice and certain blocks.

Each character can be switched on the fly by pressing the Select button. Having five different playable characters gives a nice variety to the tried and true jump and gun gameplay. Being able to switch without pausing helps the player stay in the flow of the game and keeps the game moving along. After rescuing the rest of the crew you'll be tasked with destroying the Toad Brigade's biggest ship, the Magma Tanker, from the inside. Inside of the Toad's ship the game switches genres to become an R-type style auto scrolling shooter, as Bucky and the gang board miniature space ships. These segments become increasingly common the deeper you venture into the Toad's ship. Despite the late game genre switch, these segments still feel like they belong with the rest of the game.

You'll have to put all of the members of Bucky's crew to good use to get through the obstacles you'll face. This difficult game will challenge even the most skilled of retro game veterans in its later stages. The action is pretty straightforward with out any real puzzle solving but you will have to get creative in your use of Bucky's specific crew member in order to pass certain areas. Many of the trickiest obstacles of the day make appearances, including the infamous disappearing and reappearing blocks commonly featured in Mega Man games and lots of spikes, pits and enemies that can kill you instantly.



Deadeye zips along on a cart (left), Jenny navigates an escape route (right)

The difficulty level while challenging, is not unfairly brutal. It'll take some memorization and difficult jumps to complete the game but it is still a do-able challenge. You'll probably die a lot, but the game features frequent checkpoints as well as many extra lives to be had. Your life bar can also be upgraded by items found in the game and in general, enemy fire does not damage your character all that much. The game also has unlimited continues, which go a long way towards helping you complete your quest. Thankfully the game also contains a password system as the game is rather long for an NES game.

Bucky O'Hare features highly detailed colorful graphics courtesy of Konami's skilled development team. Bucky and his allies have very detailed sprites and closely resemble the look of their cartoon show and action figure counter parts. The toads and other enemies you'll be blasting are also similarly detailed and easy on the eyes. The game even features a nicely done animated opening cut scene, to get you in the mood to croak some toads. There are also conversations between Bucky and his crew after you rescue them. The game also runs perfectly smooth on the NES hardware and does not suffer from any major slowdown or pixel flicker issues despite the pretty graphics.

All in all I would say Bucky O'Hare is well worth your time if you are looking for a fun, well designed shooter. It's absolutely packed with variety and crammed full of catchy tunes. While it has become a little expensive to obtain a physical copy due to its status as a late era NES game with a cult following, I'd highly recommend searching this one out. If you get the chance to help Bucky and his crew end the Toad Wars you'll have a blast! I declare this game to be a hare above the rest of the shooter crop on the NES and a definite hidden gem.



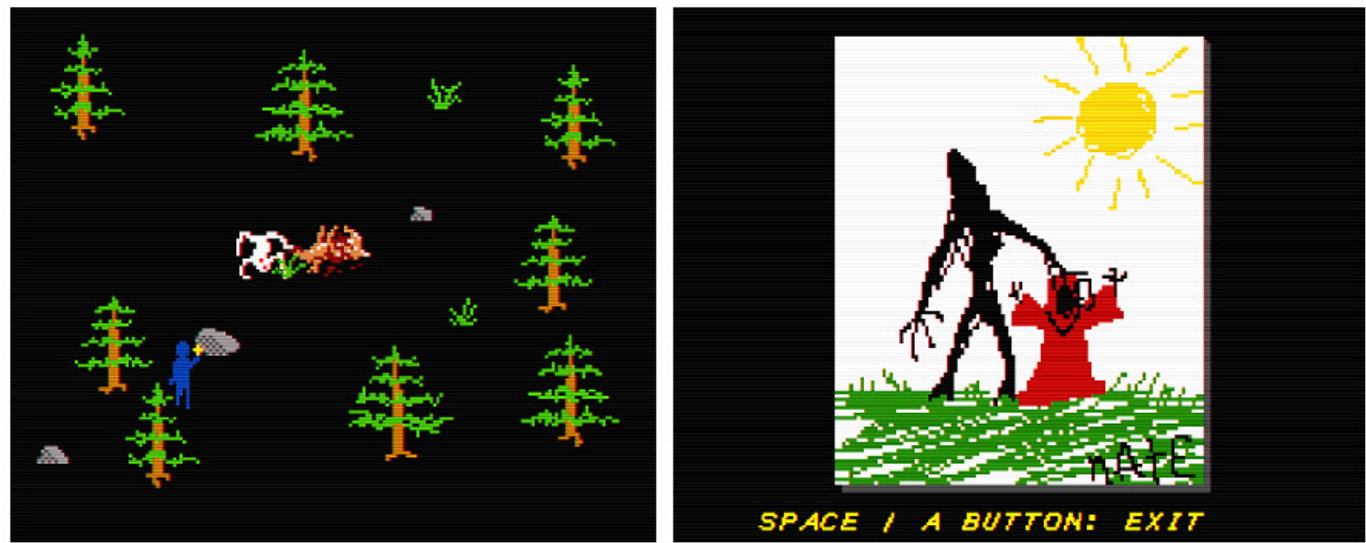
FAITH - Retro 80's Horror

by [David Lundin, Jr.](#)

"...What I am about to do has not been approved by the Vatican." Halloween may have just passed but as days turn cold and nights grow long, you may still be looking for a game with spooky chills and an eerie atmosphere. FAITH, developed by Airdorf Games, delivers these sensations along with a retro computing aesthetic and setting right out of the 1980's. On September 21st, 1986 Father Allred, along with his assistant John Ward, travel to the house of the Martin Family in rural Connecticut. The purpose of their visit is to investigate an apparent demonic possession of the Martins' teenage daughter, Amy. Father Allred's attempted exorcism on Amy goes terribly wrong, leaving himself and

Amy's family dead, with only John Ward surviving the incident and Amy's whereabouts unknown. One year later John Ward returns to the Martin residence to conduct a second exorcism, finish with he and Father Allred started, and attempt to bring peace to Amy's soul as well as his own.

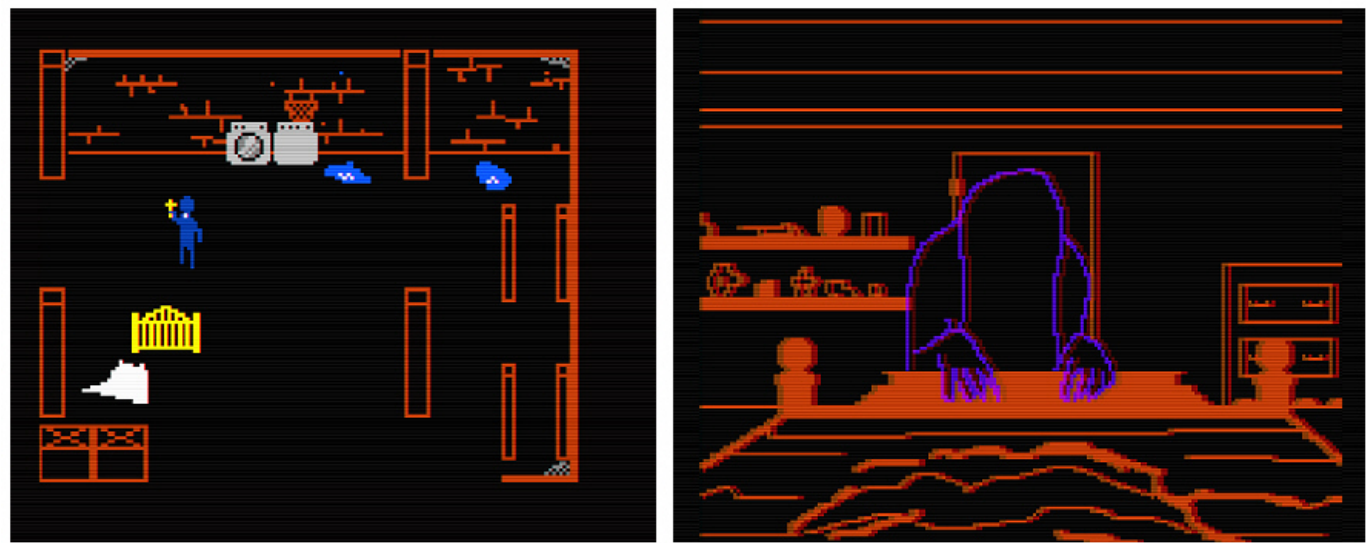
Although released in 2017, FAITH is designed to both resemble and play like a game from the vintage in when it takes place. The game will feel visually familiar to anyone who has experience playing computer games of the mid 1980's, specifically Apple II or MS-DOS games. Controlling John Ward is very simple with directional movement and an action key, generally used to hold up a cross to exorcise demons or defend yourself. As John approaches the Martin residence he will come upon objects that can be cleansed by holding up his cross. Once an object is purified it will leave behind a note - sometimes a letter, other times a newspaper clipping - these serve to establish both the backstory and narrative of the game. Interestingly many of the notes seem to contradict one another and depending on the player's actions, different notes may be obtained that often lead to more obscurity rather than clarity.



John prepares to repel an approaching demonic creature that has killed a deer (left), a child's strange illustration found in the Martin residence (right)

The forest outside the Martin residence is fairly large and randomized outside of a few key locations, creating a sense of disorientation right from the start. A demonic creature also roams the forest, appearing suddenly and rapidly scrambling toward John at a moment's notice. Holding up the cross in the direction of the approaching demon will send it back but the player must remain on alert at all times. These attacks never cease to be startling, compounded with crude digitized speech created with vintage text-to-speech software. Once inside the Martin house the mystery only deepens, with beautifully rotoscoped cutscenes that further surprise, yet remain within the vintage aesthetic of the game.

FAITH will take about an hour to complete and features multiple endings to discover and secrets to find on additional plays. What I enjoy most about the experience is just how well-written the game's narrative is, coupled with how it is structured. The more information the player uncovers, the less of what actually happened that night in 1986 becomes clear. It's not very often a game of this style and short length causes me to think about it so much but FAITH did just that. There's also something to be said about a modern indie horror game, set during the "Satanic Panic" in the mid 1980's, that is designed to resemble and play like a game released in the mid 1980's. There are even a few humorous deaths that feel like a nod to the Sierra adventure games of the day, as well as plenty of other ways to meet your demise.



John exorcises a spirit from a crib in the basement of the Martin residence (left), awaking to a rotoscoped cutscene (right)

FAITH can be downloaded for free as the full and complete game, with the only limitation that a saved game will not persist after closing the program. For as little as \$1.00 a deluxe version can be purchased, which not only adds save game retention, it also features a pair of different lighting modes that freshen up the experience on subsequent playthroughs - adding to the atmospheric tension. The series continued with FAITH Chapter II, which is a bit like two games in one with a standalone demo story in addition to the sequel itself. As with the original game, the continuing story often creates more questions than it answers, and it too can be purchased for as little as \$1.00. FAITH III is currently in development with a standalone demo available on Steam, with the entire series slated to appear on consoles in the future. It also must be emphasized that although the FAITH games feature simple retro computing graphics, the subject matter they pertain to is absolutely intended to be played by an adult audience. Turn out the lights, put on some headphones, and be prepared for a spine tingling retrogaming mystery.

Download and purchase FAITH and FAITH II as complete, DRM free programs at itch.io:

FAITH: <https://airdorf.itch.io/faith>

FAITH Chapter II: <https://airdorf.itch.io/faith2>



Rad Racer (NES) - I'm a Highway Star

by [David Lundin, Jr.](#)

By the late 1980's Nintendo had proven there was still a market for home video games in the United States. Contemporary news reports and television media is awash with stories about how the country is in love with the Nintendo Entertainment System, a sharp contrast to what many were reporting about video games at the end of 1983. It could be said that Nintendo single-handedly saved the American home video game industry from oblivion, or at least rapidly restarted it, as their hardware flew off shelves coast to coast. Yet by 1987 one very popular genre is still lacking on the NES: auto racing. Sure there were many superb platforming games and quite a few solid arcade conversions, lots of shooters, a couple great adventure games - but not really a defining racing game. Even in Japan the offerings were quite slim, outside of games such as Excitebike and F1 Race, both of which certainly felt like games from an earlier era. That all changed when Square released Highway Star for the Famicom in Japan, which was quickly brought to the NES as Rad Racer. In the United States Rad Racer became one of the early signature games for the NES platform, actually being published by Nintendo directly, giving it a much deserved first party advertising blitz. This was with good reason as the game featured sharp graphics, a great soundtrack and intense gameplay.

Rad Racer drops the player into the seat of either a Ferrari 328 or F-1 Machine on a coast to coast speed race. Both cars handle and perform the same, although when driving the F-1 Machine all computer controlled traffic cars will be F-1 Machines as well. When driving the 328 Twin Turbo each course is accompanied by a different make of traffic car, all of them modeled after real world automobiles. There are eight courses in all, some which have day and night cycles as well as changing weather conditions to add some visual variety. Each course begins at a standing start with an audible chime that counts down until the race begins. A timer constantly ticks down and the objective is to reach checkpoints spread out along the course before the timer reaches zero. Upon reaching a checkpoint more time is added and the race continues. After reaching the end of a course any remaining time is converted into points, which are added to the player's score as a bonus, then the next course begins. The initial starting time for each course is always the same in respect to which course it is and remaining time from the end of one course cannot be carried over to the next.



Surf and sand at Sunset Coastline (left), San Francisco Highway features impressive visuals (center), flipping after hitting a tree (right)

The traffic cars become more and more of a nuisance as each course is completed. They will begin to change lanes more often, move at different rates of speed, and by course five generally become very challenging to get around. While the only thing the player is racing against is the clock, the traffic cars must still be quickly navigated around to save precious time. If a traffic car is traveling at around the same speed as your car and is collided with, you will bounce off of it. What direction and how hard you bounce off is determined by where you strike a traffic car. If a car is hit dead on you'll simply be bounced back a little, however if you slide across a traffic car's rear bumper you'll be thrown to the side. Additionally if you come upon a slow moving traffic car while traveling at high speed, you will crash and be tossed from the road surface. This is also the case if you hit any objects along the side of the course. After your car lands it is automatically moved to the center lane and the game continues however this eats up valuable time. Thankfully control is fast and accurate with the directional pad left and right smoothly controlling steering. Holding up on the directional pad turns on the turbo which boosts your car's acceleration from the 100 km/h band until it tops out at 255 km/h. Pressing down on the directional pad cycles through three different background songs and is also how the background music can be turned off. The A button accelerates and the B button brakes, simple as that and extremely responsive.

Even though it wears influences of Sega's Out Run on its sleeve, this game set the standard for how driving games on the NES would look for the remainder of the system's lifespan. Viewed from a behind-the-car perspective, the sense of speed is incredible for a game of this era. Where games like Pole Position and Out Run used the same perspective, none quite conveyed how fast you were zipping by traffic and the roadside like Rad Racer does. Trees, road signs, light posts, all whiz by at a blinding rate. Traffic cars move at many different rates of speed which further enhances the feeling that you car is actually moving and sliding along the tarmac, rather than being a stationary object in the middle of the screen. Sliding around a corner, slowly losing grip while knocking against a traffic car, then a slower traffic car appears on the horizon, you flash by both cars as trees stream by along the roadside - it all makes it seem as if your car has mass and is moving quickly, which is the point of a racing game.

Roadside objects change in each course and there are generally three or four different objects that will show up in each one. Checkpoints are always represented by a pair of checkered flags, one on each side, and the end of a course is lined with them on both sides. Each course features a different backdrop, color of the area around the road, and skyline. For instance the first course, Sunset Coastline, is along a beach with sand on either side of the road, the ocean in the distance with palm trees on the horizon and a breezy sky overhead. The first course is also one that features a day and night cycle. Near the midpoint of the course the sky will begin to darken and then fall to the curtain of night, a short while later the sky will brighten once again. Two courses are run completely in the night - San Francisco Highway and Los Angeles Night Way. Both these courses were definitely show stoppers in their day, even being featured as the box art for the NES version, and are still very impressive to look at. A couple of the later courses feature changing weather conditions that work much in the same way as the day and night cycle at Sunset Coastline. There are also elevation changes abound and each course has multiple levels of background that scroll at different speeds, further enhancing the feeling of speed and depth.



Navigating tight Los Angeles Night Way traffic (left), zooming along the Snow White Line (center), each course begins with a route map (right)

Matching its visual presentation, the audio package of Rad Racer is easily one of the most superb on the hardware, especially among its contemporary releases. There's a nice digital engine sound of your car throttling up as well as a slightly different sound when you are on the turbo. When entering a turn, wheels squeal as they lose traction and the car slides. Bumping into traffic cars produces a loud screech and crunch sound and the sound of the car flipping over in mid-air after a wreck is unforgettable. There is a different and audible sound for nearly everything in the game, from the start of a course until sliding across the finish line, and all of them make sense and are of high quality. The music, simply put, is amazing. The score for Rad Racer is some of Nobuo Uematsu's earliest work, long before he would be known the world over for his Final Fantasy compositions. In my opinion it is also his best. There are three background music tracks in all and while each one is completely different, they all have a blues and jazz feel. It's incredible that Uematsu was able to get this kind of sound out of the NES hardware, especially considering how young the hardware was at the time. Also all this was accomplished without using any special sound chips. It's a shame that the music from Rad Racer is not given the praise in the video game community it so rightly deserves. Being able to design music that sounds this good on hardware restrictions of this era is mind boggling.

Of course those who owned this game when it was new probably remember it had a bit of a gimmick in the box. Rad Racer featured a "3D" mode with a pair of standard red / cyan filter glasses included with the game. This was a cheap and fast rework of the higher quality Japan-only Famicom 3D System accessory, which actually provided a decent 3D experience through the use of an active shutter visor. However the 3D mode in Rad Racer boils down to a flickery mess which is why only one other US released game, 3-D WorldRunner, featured the 3D mode. Note that the Japanese version of Rad Racer (Highway Star) and the Japan-only sequel to WorldRunner (JJ: Tobidase Daisakusen Part II) both featured support for the Famicom 3D System, as did a few other Famicom titles. It's a shame this never had an NES counterpart or was more widely supported, as it's a pretty cool accessory.



The Japanese version supported the Famicom 3D System headset, offering a more impressive 3D sensation

Over 30 years after being released Rad Racer still looks, sounds, and plays near perfectly. It remains a solid and responsive challenge that I continue to come back to no matter how many times I scream through its eight courses. Anyone with even a passing interest in NES racing games should have a copy of this one, there's simply no reason not to. It stands as a prime example of perfect game design of the NES era - easy to pick up and play yet complex enough to invest a good amount of time in. Rad Racer would do so well in the United States that it would spawn a US-only sequel in 1990, however due to some questionable design decisions it would never do as well as the original. Rad Racer is a true classic of the hardware, of the era, and of the NES cultural experience. To me it's every bit a part of the NES as Super Mario Bros. and that's saying quite a lot.



Duck Hunt Memories

by [Todd Friedman](#)

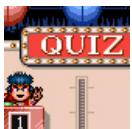
Most of the time if you ask a gamer to name some popular shooter titles, they will tell you games like Call of Duty, Doom, Halo, Grand Theft Auto and GoldenEye. Before all of these hit the shelves, Nintendo had provided a shooter game with the new Nintendo Entertainment System launch in 1985. One of the games that would be the poster child of the NES shooters was Duck Hunt. The NES offered an alternative to the games using the control pad with the "NES Zapper." This plastic gun shaped controller made shooting the TV screen exciting and challenging at the same time. Duck Hunt was a game designed for all ages. As simple as the task of shooting birds in the sky was, the game itself brought challenges to the gamer.

The rules were very simple, when one or two ducks flew out a time you would shoot them down. The higher the level you get to, the faster they fly around, making it tricky to get them. In the way are some trees and bushes to block your shot. At each round a finite number of ducks will come out. When the round is over points are added up based on your performance. If you hit the necessary target score for that round you move on to the next one. Each time the ducks fly onto the screen the player gets three shots in order to hit the ducks. If you miss them, then an annoying dog pops out of the bushes and laughs at you.



There are three different game modes for Duck Hunt. The duck game has Game A and Game B. The Game C option replaced ducks with clay pigeons. This clay shooting simulation gives the gamer an alternative challenge that does not include the ducks and that laughing dog. Game A, for the novice players, only has one duck on the screen at a time during gameplay. If you are ready for a challenge, Game B will have two ducks on the screen at one time. Either way the game never gets old. Trying to get to the highest level or beating your friends score made this game one of the reasons to get an NES for the holidays that year.

Duck Hunt was also an arcade game, called "Vs. Duck Hunt." The annoying dog is more of a pain in the arcade version because he can jump out and block you from shooting the ducks in exclusive bonus rounds. Also, another big difference is the amount of ducks that come out. In the arcade game up to three ducks can fly out at a time in the bonus rounds opposed to the maximum two on the NES. One of the nostalgic parts of Duck Hunt is that you need to play it on a CRT television. The LED and flat panel TVs of today will not work with NES Zapper. There have been a few knock-off, plug and play versions of Duck Hunt, but nothing beats the original. Nintendo made a handful of other NES light gun games such as Gumshoe and Hogan's Alley, but in my opinion, Duck Hunt will always be the best of the bunch.



Weekly Retrogaming Trivia Recap

Compiled by [David Lundin, Jr.](#)

Every Friday on The Retrogaming Times Facebook page (facebook.com/theretrogamingtimes), we present a Weekly Retrogaming Trivia question. This just-for-fun trivia challenge provided each week is an opportunity to test your arcane and oddball retrogaming knowledge. The answer to the question from the previous week is posted along with a new trivia question every Friday!

Below is the recap of all questions and answers posted between this issue and the previous issue:



- 08/28/2020 - WEEK 178**
Question: Mega Man series regular, Proto Man, is known by what name in Japanese releases of the series?
- 09/04/2020 - WEEK 179**
Question: Bruce Willis provided his voice and likeness for what original PlayStation game?
- 09/11/2020 - WEEK 180**
Question: Infamously, the opening dialogue of Darius II discusses wanting to try what food?
- 09/18/2020 - WEEK 181**
Question: What classic Activision Atari game can be completed in under six seconds?
- 09/25/2020 - WEEK 182**
Question: "The worst foe lies within the self..." is the slogan for what RPG?
- 10/02/2020 - WEEK 183**
Question: The NES game Little Nemo: The Dream Master takes place in what year?
- 10/09/2020 - WEEK 184**
Question: The LucasArts adventure game Loom begins on what birthday of main character Bobbin Threadbare?
- 10/16/2020 - WEEK 185**
Question: What is the only video game series that later incorporated a "Worlds of Power" novelization into its official narrative?
- 10/23/2020 - WEEK 186**
Question: What Activision developed Atari game features a cardboard overlay for the console itself?



The very awesome and very wide Darius II opens with banter that has become a bit of a joke among shooter aficionados.

Answers:
Week 178 Answer: Blues.
Week 179 Answer: Apocalypse (1998).

It is the dawn of your
seventeenth year.




Don't be left out! Be sure to follow [The Retrogaming Times on Facebook](#) or [The Retrogaming Times Info Club on Twitter](#) for a new retrogaming trivia question every Friday!

by **David Lundin, Jr.**

Thank you once again for reading The Retrogaming Times. We'll be back on January 7th with our next issue. Be sure to follow [The Retrogaming Times on Facebook](#) and join our community for the latest updates and information! Additionally [The Retrogaming Times Info Club on Twitter](#) features up-to-the-moment news and notifications for all things The Retrogaming Times! I sincerely hope you enjoyed this issue and that you will return to read the next issue and possibly submit an article yourself. **Remember, this newsletter can only exist with your help.** Simply send your articles directly to me at trt@classicplastic.net or check out the submission guidelines on the main page. Submit an article today and join a great retrogaming tradition!

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